

REPORT OF THE BRITISH AGENT

TO THE RUSSIAN SEAL ISLANDS UNDER THE PROVISIONAL AGREEMENT, ENTERED INTO BETWEEN HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT AND THAT OF RUSSIA FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE SEAL FISHERIES DURING 1893.

OTTAWA, 31st December, 1893.

MY LORD,—I have the honour to submit the report of my visit to the Russian Seal Islands, as British Agent, under the Provisional Agreement entered into between Her Majesty's Government and that of Russia, for the protection of the Seal Fisheries during 1893.

REPORT.

PROVISIONAL AGREEMENT.

ST. PETERSBURGH, May 10 (22), 1893.

M. le Chargé d'Affaires,

In reply to your communication of the 30th April (12th May), I have the honour to inform you that the Imperial Government, while accepting the draft arrangement annexed to that communication, prefer to give it the character of an exchange of notes, for the following reasons :—

Because the too concise wording of the above-mentioned draft would leave room for certain misunderstandings, and perhaps even for complications, which it would be desirable to avoid ;

Because the Imperial Government could not agree to the draft in question without some reservations designed to safeguard their freedom of judgment in the future.

It is understood that the agreement to be arrived at between our two Governments will leave intact all the rights of Russia in her territorial waters.

As to our reservations, they refer to the points mentioned below :

1. In consenting to hand over to the British authorities the English ships engaged in sealing within the prohibited zones, we do not wish to prejudice, generally, the question of the rights of a riverain Power to extend her territorial jurisdiction in certain special cases beyond waters properly called territorial.

2. The Imperial Government desire to preserve complete liberty of action as to choosing in the future between the two systems of protecting seals, either by the method of a prohibited zone, or by the method of entirely prohibiting pelagic sealing, or regulating it in the open sea.

3. The present arrangement cannot in any manner be considered as a precedent, and will be looked upon by us as of an essentially provisional nature, intended to meet present circumstances.

With these reservations, we accept the British proposal in the following terms :—

1. During the year ending the 31st December, 1893, the English Government will prohibit their subjects from hunting seals within a zone of 10 marine miles on all the Russian coasts of Behring Sea and the North Pacific Ocean ; as well as within a zone of 80 miles round the Komandorsky Islands and Tulénaw (Robben Island).